



P O N D E R O S A

M I N E F I G H T E R

HARRIS COUNTY ESD #26

Fall 2005

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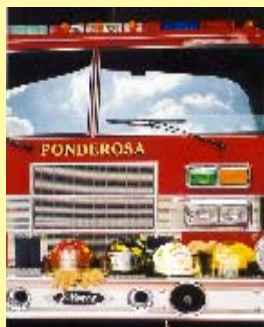
HCESD #28 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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A "GREEN LIGHT" FOR TRAFFIC SIGNAL PREEMPTION

We've all had our moments of irritation on FM 1960...sitting in bumper to bumper traffic, making dangerous left-hand turns and waiting what seems like eons to get through a traffic light. So imagine, for a moment, the frustration emergency vehicle drivers and personnel must face when precious minutes can mean the difference between life and death.

Taking into consideration the overloaded traffic on FM 1960 and the realization that, in many cases, drivers do not hear or do not stop or move aside for approaching emergency vehicles, we set out to find a safe and effective solution to an increasing problem. Avoiding FM 1960 was not an option. It is often the scene of accidents or the best route to an emergency situation. So we had to work with our partners to improve our response time on the busy thoroughfare. After much research, we proposed the option of Traffic Signal Preemption to Harris County Emergency Services District #11 for Cypress Creek EMS, and the proposal for a pilot project was approved.

Traffic Signal Preemption -- What is it?

Traffic Signal Preemption is a state-of-the-art technology that facilitates the movement of emergency vehicles (police, fire and ambulance) through traffic-signal controlled intersections.

Q How does it work?

A The emergency vehicle communicates to the intersection (via its own digital identity), requesting an authorized green light.

- The intersection's preemption equipment validates the request and relays it to the signal controller.

- The controller then manages an automatic termination of the side street green light, or extends an existing green in the emergency vehicle travel direction.

- The controller will hold the green light until the emergency vehicle passes through the intersection. Once passed, the light will return to its normal function.

Q Why do we need it?

A When an emergency vehicle is responding to a call, every second counts. Changing trends in our area, such as an increase in emergency calls, complex intersections, higher traffic levels and soundproofed vehicles, all contribute to slowing down response time. This technology is

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF...

Hurricane Rita's narrow miss certainly spared our area a lot of grief and destruction. There were power outages and minor damage to trees and buildings, but on the whole, we can consider ourselves very lucky, and we appreciate everyone's cooperation and planning.

It does appear, although, that the storm did highlight a significant issue: the need for a detailed and effective evacuation plan. Traffic conditions were extreme, frustrating and, in some cases, dangerous. We don't yet have all the answers, but as proposed plans / ideas become available, we will keep you informed.

PVFD Storm Preparedness

Your Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department and its members did an outstanding job in hardening our response system in this time of need. Two fire engines were parked in Brenham as asset protection and to ensure that, if the storm did hit, we had at least two

functioning apparatus. We closed stations 2 and 3 due to the lightweight construction, but our headquarters were well-staffed with members and immediate family (and pets). I asked for help and we got it!

Our friends in Gillette, Wyoming sent six firefighters our way, and Miami Township, Ohio sent two deputy chiefs to assist in aftermath actions (if required). We were relieved that their services were only needed to clear the roads of a few downed trees, and the teams worked well with Commissioner Jerry Eversole's staff in that effort (the guys from Wyoming are experts at tree clearing – much of their work is in wild land fire conditions). The Ohio chiefs were here to assist in managing entire operations — we knew that if the big one came, our command staff would need help and rest.

Responding to a Need

Although we escaped her wrath, Rita did destroy a huge swath of



southeast Texas. We received a request from Orange County for direct mutual aid. A task force of thirteen, including Ponderosa members and the Wyoming and Ohio groups, drove over on September 24th and assisted for two days. Chief Scott Kerwood was very appreciative of our assistance, and we were glad to help.

As always, our members willingly stepped up to the plate, and I can't say enough good things about them. PVFD volunteers live in our area and have a direct ownership relationship with its citizens and businesses. They continue to serve our community at the highest level, and I'd like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and pride. ■

Traffic Light Preemption

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a significant investment, but one that will help us to do our job while reducing risk to ourselves and the public. It's all about getting help to you as quickly as possible...it's why we're here.

Q What stretch of FM 1960 will be affected?

A During the next few months, the Traffic Signal Preemption technology will be installed in the 12 intersections between Kuykendahl and Imperial Valley (including the IH 45 intersection).

The Clear Benefits of Traffic Signal Preemption

- The current "stop-and-go" that emergency vehicles experience while responding to calls causes vehicle wear, driver stress and EMS patient discomfort. Traffic Signal Preemption improves the constant speed and improves response time, while extending the life of our equipment.
- Liability is decreased for both the public and the emergency response team. We all drive by the "green light rule".
- Helps protect lives and property, and improves travel safety for all. The quicker we get to the scene, the quicker we can do our job. ■



Have a Very Merry...and SAFE Holiday Season

- Use caution with holiday decorations and whenever possible, choose those made with flame-resistant, flame-retardant or non-combustible materials.
- Keep candles away from decorations and other combustible materials, and never use them to decorate Christmas trees. ALWAYS use a ceramic plate under the candle.
- Purchase only lights and electrical decorations bearing the name of an independent testing lab, and follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and maintenance.
- Carefully inspect new and previously used light strings and replace damaged items before plugging lights in. Do not overload extension cords.
- Always unplug lights before replacing light bulbs or fuses, and always turn off all light strings and decorations before leaving the house or going to bed.
- Don't mount lights in any way that can damage the cord's wire insulation.
- Keep children and pets away from light strings and electrical decorations.
- Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the U.S. When cooking for holiday guests, keep an eye on the range.
- Test smoke alarms and make sure family members / guests know the fire escape plan.



Don't Let the Rising Cost of Energy Put You in Danger This Winter



With the sharp rise in natural gas and oil prices, the cost to heat your home or apartment this winter is expected to rise dramatically from last year. We realize that this may drive some to use supplemental heating sources, such as fireplaces and space heaters...but we urge you to use caution – and always remember to think safety first.

Heating equipment can be used safely if you follow these recommendations:

Space Heaters

- When purchasing a space heater, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory, and be sure fixed space heaters are installed by a qualified technician.
- Keep or maintain a 36-inch clearance between space heaters and anything that can burn.
- Have any gas-fueled heating device installed with proper attention to ventilation. If unvented gas space heaters are used in bedrooms or bathrooms, make sure they are small and well-mounted.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector in a central location outside sleeping areas – read and follow the instructions for installation carefully.

Fireplaces

- Have fireplaces, chimneys and chimney connectors inspected annually by a professional, and cleaned as often as inspections suggest. Use only wood that is properly seasoned to reduce creosote build-up.
- Make sure your fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room. Allow fireplace ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container. ■

96 HOURS OR BUST

In the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, are we more prepared for an emergency? A recent survey conducted by New York University* seems to suggest that we are not. In fact, the survey, which polled individuals on emergency preparedness pre- and post Katrina, states that, "Americans are no more prepared after Katrina hit than they had been before".

So why is this? How could storms so devastating and images so frightening fail to send us all clamoring for emergency plans and materials? The study does offer some reasoning for this lack of change and continuing barriers to preparedness.



Where Do We Go For Help?

According to the NYU study, "Many Americans lost confidence in their local government, police departments and local businesses to help those who need assistance following an emergency. Only fire departments and charitable organizations like the Red Cross and Salvation Army held on to their pre-Katrina levels of confidence." In other words, folks just aren't sure where to turn.

The storms did highlight emergency preparedness issues at

the local and national levels of government, and as a result, there are major changes expected to come. But Americans "are still highly dependent on these same federal and local institutions to tell them what to do in an emergency".

As the federal and local authorities work together to rebuild the public's confidence, we must also work individually to personally prepare for the safety of ourselves and our families. Emergencies are not limited to hurricanes. We are not in the clear until next year's storm season. An emergency can come at any time of year, and in many forms:

Mother Nature (hurricanes, floods, tornados, ice storms, drought); terrorist attacks; chemical spills; fuel shortages; power outages; and health emergencies, such as a flu epidemic.

In an emergency situation, **you must prepare to sustain the basic needs of your family for 96 hours** – the time dur-

ing which emergency services are overloaded. So, think ahead!

Emergency Checklist

(Must Haves):

- Water – frozen jugs
- Food – non perishables
- Medications – never allow yourself to be in low supply
- Flashlights and batteries
- Battery-operated radio
- Plastic to cover holes in your roof – and a staple gun
- Generator with fuel – but watch that fuel storage and carbon monoxide.



Changes on the Horizon

Our nation is undergoing extensive changes as we try to find the right formula for disaster response. The PVFD is an "all hazards response" agency — that means we are to be prepared, just like you — for anything that threatens our lives and property. There is no perfect response to the "perfect storm", but if we work together to prepare ourselves and our agencies, we can execute our job to the best of our abilities.

Stay tuned...we will keep you informed and up-to-date as our local and federal organizations formulate improved plans for emergency situations. ■

* NYU – Center for Catastrophe Preparedness and Response: "The Katrina Effect on American Preparedness – A report on the lessons Americans learned in watching the Katrina catastrophe unfold." Professor Paul C. Light



What does it take to run a first class Fire Department?

Running a fire department takes committed, dedicated and well-trained individuals. It also takes an incredible amount of money...

From equipment to upkeep to insurance, running a fire department isn't cheap...not even close. Each year – and sometimes, it seems, each day – our operating costs continue to increase, and it appears that our current level of monetary resources will not be sufficient to maintain our respected service level in two to three years.

To ensure that we have the best trained firefighters, the fastest possible response time, the most current equipment, and the latest technology, we must have the necessary funds. It's possible you may never require our services, but it's also possible you will.

When it comes to the safety of our citizens...your family... cutting corners is not an option.

Here are just a few of a fire department's necessities.....

Aerial Tower Ladder Truck	\$850,000
Rescue Truck	\$425,000
Fire Engine	\$360,000
Payroll	\$300,000 / yr.
Insurance	\$ 92,000 / yr.
Thermal Imager Equipment	\$ 8,000
Water Rescue Boat	\$ 5,000
Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)	\$ 3,000
Preventative Maintenance per truck	\$ 1,200 / yr.
Air Cylinder (<i>must have one spare for each SCBA per standards</i>)	\$ 900
Handheld Radio	\$ 900
Bunker Coat	\$ 600
Bunker Pants	\$ 400
Pager	\$ 400 / each
Boots (leather)	\$ 200
Boots (rubber)	\$ 90
Protective Helmet	\$ 175
Firefighter's Hood	\$40 - \$140
Gloves	\$35 - \$120
Red Suspenders	\$ 20

All of this equipment must be maintained in excellent condition and ready for deployment at a moment's notice. Replacement occurs in various cycles as the budget permits.

MEET OUR BOARD MEMBERS



Jim Chatterton

“It is our responsibility to issue the taxpayer’s money wisely,” said Emergency Services District #28 Board Member, Jim Chatterton. “The Board takes this role seriously and we make sure every dollar is spent accordingly.”

Chatterton, Secretary of HCESD #28, was appointed to the Board in 1984 and has dedicated his time and energy to the success of the Ponderosa VFD ever since.

“If there’s a job to be done, you’ve got to be devoted to it.”

Chatterton has certainly done that. His years on the Board have helped the PVFD grow from a small department run on donations to the thriving, respected organization it is today.

“It has been a real joy to see the contribution this fire department and its firefighters have made to the community over the years,” said Chatterton. “The Board and the fire department have always worked so well together...we understand that our job is to meet the needs of our community, and I

think we’ve been real successful at doing that.”

Chatterton was born in Galveston and grew up in the Webster area. Early in his career, he worked at NASA, and he is now a Vice President at Five Point Management Co. which leases and manages mainly medical facilities. Chatterton has lived with his wife of over 50 years, Patsy, in Cypresswood since 1973. They enjoy spending time with their two children, Rebbecca and Michael, their four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.



Bob Hook

When Ponderosa resident, Bob Hook, was elected to the Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Association Board of Directors 15 years ago, he was no stranger to community involvement.

“I’ve always been interested in the security of our area,” said Hook. “It is important to me to be an active part of maintaining the quality of life in this community.”

And that’s not just talk. Bob Hook has served in numer-

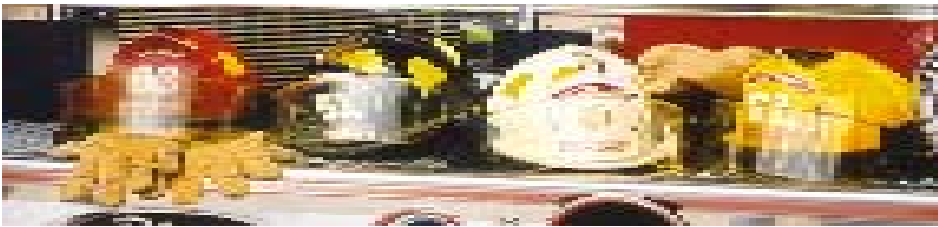
ous positions throughout the years, playing an integral role in preserving the livelihood of the area. He served for nine years as Security Coordinator and President of the Ponderosa Forest Maintenance Association and was a member of the Board of Directors for the Cypress Creek United Civic Association (CCUCA). Hook was also a graduate of the first Citizen’s Police Academy class, and served as Cub Master, Asst. Scout Master and ultimately District Chairman of the Boy Scouts, while his boys, Jim and Tom were involved in the Boy Scouts of America organization.

“Through my previous experience in community organizations, I developed an interest in Emergency Services work, which brought me to the Board of Directors of the Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Association,” said Hook. “But it’s a fire chief that provides excellent leadership and a professional team of volunteer officers and firefighters that have kept me committed all this time.”

Throughout the years, Hook has seen the PVFD grow, build new facilities and expand with the needs of a growing community.

“I am proud to be associated with a group of people so devoted to providing quality services to the residents they serve.”

Hook has been in the insurance industry for 39 years and is currently a Regional Manager for Southland National Insurance Corporation. He enjoys spending time with his wife, Sally, children, Jim, Tom and Ashley and his beautiful granddaughter, Lauren Ruth Hook. ■



MEET YOUR PONDEROSA FIREFIGHTERS...



Faron Graeter

Ponderosa Volunteer Firefighter, Faron Graeter, can't remember a time when firefighting wasn't a part of his life.

"My dad was a firefighter with the Houston Fire Department for 32 years, and my uncle was a firefighter there as well," said Graeter. "When I was a kid, I stayed with my dad at the station quite a bit, which was really exciting for me. Being a part of that life, being a firefighter, was all I ever wanted to do."

Graeter has been a volunteer with Ponderosa VFD for 18 years, and was with the Harris County Sheriff's Department for 15 years. He is extremely well-qualified, with certifications ranging from Advanced Firefighter and Level 2 Instructor to Master Peace Officer, Hazardous Materials Specialist, Fire and Explosion Specialist, and Rescue Team Member for Swiftwater, High Angle, Confined Space and Vehicle Extrication. His experience is impressive and his instruction is invaluable.

"Mentoring new fireman can be one of the most challenging parts of the job," Graeter said. "It is on the veteran firefighter's shoulders to teach them well...keep them from getting hurt. Taking care of those in our community is our number one priority, and this fire department does an excellent job at it, but we also have to keep our own members safe, well-trained and aware. This fire department is one of the most committed I've ever seen to making sure that happens."

Outside of a 3-year stint with the Army in the mid-80's, Graeter has always lived in the area. He currently lives with his wife of seven years, Kelly, in Northridge Park West.

"I love the camaraderie at the fire station and the ability to be a productive member of my community. I'll stay at PVFD for as long as they'll have me!"

Matt Turley

Talk about a family affair...Matt Turley, a Company Two Lieutenant with the PVFD, is so dedicated to his role in the fire department that his enthusiasm rubbed off on the whole family. His wife, Jeanette, and daughter, Amanda (16), are both members of the Fire Corps Rehab Team; his oldest son, Bruce (18) is also a Ponderosa firefighter; and his youngest son, Brian (13) is a junior firefighter.

"With all that I've seen over the years, and all the emergency

calls we've made, I still consider my proudest moments with PVFD to be the times I watched my sons graduate from their recruit classes," said Turley.

Turley moved to the area in 1983, when he was just eighteen. He joined the PVFD in 1989, and has since been an officer at all three Ponderosa stations.

"My dad was an EMT in Arizona and his brother was a firefighter," said Turley. "I always had an interest in becoming a firefighter myself, but didn't make the leap until some friends at Ponderosa's Station Two gave me the gentle nudge."

"I enjoy serving the community," said Turley. "It seems that people have moved away from that, which is too bad. You can't tell someone how rewarding it is to help others - they have to feel it for themselves...they have to feel the appreciation and hear the gratitude. It's wonderful."

Turley is an insurance appraiser with American Century and Casualty in the Greenspoint area. When not working or volunteering, he enjoys flying (he's had his private pilot's license since he was seventeen), and boating and camping with his family.



INITIAL FIRE CORPS TEAMS HAVE BIG IMPACT

At the PVFD, we realize that without the help of our community, we can't do it all. That's part of the reason we recently decided to incorporate a program that has proven successful in fire departments across the country... the Fire Corps. Developed to utilize the wide range of citizen expertise in our community, the Fire Corps allows our emergency responders to focus on what we are trained to do best.

The Fire Corps is the latest addition to the Citizen Corps program, and is geared toward engaging volunteers across the nation in hometown security and preparedness. The program is not intended to replace or supplant the duties and/or positions carried out or held by existing paid or volunteer personnel, but was developed with the goal of matching fire department's administrative needs with an untapped pool of talent.

The PVFD recently implemented two Fire Corps teams:

1. The PVFD Rehab Team: Formed several years ago, our first Fire Corps group, the PVFD Rehab team, is made up of spouses of firefighter members. This amaz-

ing group volunteers their time to provide physical rehabilitation to our responders by providing drinks and food (for long-term emergency events). They also assist the department in public education and provide mutual aid support to other fire department rehab teams. We are proud of them and grateful for all that they do.

2. The "Hurricane Hardening" Team: This second PVFD Fire Corps team was initiated between hurricanes Katrina and Rita to evaluate our facilities and recommend improvements to minimize damage. Also formed to address improvements in our preparations for weather-related events, the team is headed up by former Fire Chief, John O'Gorman and participants include Dan Dronberger and Richard Murphy from Westador, and Dale Crawford from North Forest. The information they provided was invaluable



and further sealed our belief that Fire Corps teams are an extremely positive addition to this fire department.

In the near future, the PVFD will be identifying additional needs that Fire Corps teams can fill. If you are interested in volunteering your time or if you have ideas as to how citizens in the community can help out, please don't hesitate to give us a call. We thank the members of this community for their support in the past and for their continued support today, tomorrow and into the future. ■

P O N D E R O S A
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This publication is intended for the residents within the Ponderosa VFD service area. If you received it in error, we hope that you'll still read it and utilize the fire safety information.